

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. FIRST RECORD OF COMMENSALISM IN THE GOLDEN LANGUR *PRESBYTIS GEEI* KHAJURIA AT A NEW LOCATION IN ASSAM

The Golden Langur (*Presbytis geei* Khajuria) is described from the six type specimens collected by H. Khajuria of the Zoological Survey of India in 1955. It has been named *Presbytis geei* in honour of E.P. Gee, India's pioneer wildlifer and the person responsible for bringing the new primate to public attention. The monkey was reported by E.O. Shebbeare in 1907 and later by C.G. Baron in 1947 (Gee 1964). Both these records were near Jamduar on the Sankosh river in Assam. In 1953, Gee was able to see two troops of about 55 individuals at Jamduar and on a later expedition in 1959-60 on west bank of the Manas river, six more troops were seen. Based on these he recommended to the Zoological Survey of India to send a team to collect type specimens and also estimated a total of about 550 individuals to exist between the Sankosh and Manas rivers in Assam (Gee 1964). A number of other scientists have also confirmed the limits of the distribution of the species to be the two rivers and the species is not known to extend either west of the River Sankosh or east of the River Manas (Oboussier and Maydell 1959, Wayre 1968, Roonwal and Mohnot 1977, Prater 1980 and Tikader 1983). The species also extends to south-central Bhutan up to an altitude of 2400 m (Roonwal and Mohnot 1977). Gee (1968) records the species to be timid and never raiding crops as the rhesus does (which is sympatric in some localities), while Roonwal and Mohnot (1977) record it as being shy, avoiding man and almost exclusively a forest dwelling langur. In brief, the species which was the most important primatological discovery of the sub-continent in this century was known only from a narrow strip of mixed deciduous forests bound by the rivers Manas and Sankosh and was known to avoid all contact with man.

On 21.5.95, I accompanied an Assamese friend of mine, Kamini Barua to visit the Umanando Temple, a 200 year old Ahom temple located on a small island just off the coast of Guwahati, the

capital of Assam. The island or 'chaponi' is a riverine creation of the Brahmaputra which regularly creates and destroys river islands every year. The island is known basically for the temple and I was also told that I could photograph Hanuman langurs (*Presbytis entellus*) there. As the distribution of the hanuman langur in Assam is rather patchy, it was an interesting species to document. However on arrival at the temple I saw four light golden to creamy white langurs on a mango (*Mangifera indica*) tree. As this was more than a hundred kilometres further east than the recorded range of the golden langur, I closely studied the group for more than half an hour. Then upon advice from the local temple priests and my friend I bought 6 Rupees worth of bananas from a local stall and called the langurs as is usually done in the case of the rhesus (*Macaca mulatta*) and the common langur (*Presbytis entellus*) in Hindu temples. Within a few minutes, the adult male responded and came to feed within touching distance. Soon he was joined by a juvenile male as well. The adult female with a smaller juvenile (sex undetermined) remained on top of the tree and did not come down. Both the males however displayed absolutely no fear of human beings and accepted the bananas readily from the hand as well.

Upon enquiry from the local priests, it was learnt that two adult golden langurs were brought to the island two years ago (in 1993) by Bihari devotees. The source of the monkeys was believed to be somewhere in Bhutan which corresponds with the original range of the golden langur. The monkeys have bred in the new location and the two offspring, are a result of that. However apart from the offerings of the pious, these monkeys live a wild existence and do not permit themselves to be handled. This is the first record of a temple golden langur which is hitherto not known to be a commensal species.

During the hour's observations, the monkeys displayed all activities of a normal wild primate including grooming, feeding, foraging and play.

There was no threat or aggressive display however and all four displayed a very gentle and calm temperament. Apart from its interesting commensalism, the occurrence of the species in the wild for the first time outside the Manas-Sankosh complex may be noted, although the species has been helped by man into its new habitat. The breeding success of the primates in Umananda may

indicate the start of a new colony near the south bank of the Brahmaputra.

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2. OBSERVATION ON AN UNUSUAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN ASIATIC LION (*PANTHERA LEO PERSICA*)

I chanced to see an unusual sexual behaviour in a male Gir Lion. On 2nd February, 1988 when I was visiting Amritval Settlement area with a group of other officers, a mating pair was observed at Dhanatal area. I returned alone, a few hours later, to observe them more critically.

When the male was ready to copulate, he got up and walked to the female and mounted her. It was obvious that the female was non-receptive. The lioness kept sitting on its belly, tail flat on the ground, and not in the usual receptive posture, for copulation. The male mounted almost half way, over her back.

After this, the male kept rubbing his penis on the female's back for 10 to 15 seconds. Having done so the male got up quickly and ejaculated on the ground, very close to the female. This he did a couple of times.

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3. JACKAL (*CANIS AUREUS*) HUNTING COMMON LANGUR (*PRESBYTIS ENTELLUS*) IN KANHA NATIONAL PARK

The Jackal *Canis aureus* has been considered to live mainly on carrion or on small prey in the Indian jungles. I have witnessed in Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh (22° 17'N, 80° 38 'E) in the last few years its skills as a hunter. I feel they are worth recording and I do not think that hunting of common langur *Presbytis entellus* by the jackal *Canis aureus* has ever been reported from India.

I first saw a jackal killing a langur in February, 1991 in Kanha meadows and I thought it was a stray

case, but since then I have recorded four cases of langur hunting by jackals. The common langur *Presbytis entellus* is an intelligent animal and to hunt them a predator needs great skill and stealth which the jackals of Kanha seem to have mastered over the years. The operation of hunting langurs usually involves a small pack of jackals consisting of three to five individuals which would locate a troop of langurs in the meadows frolicking and running around seemingly relaxed. The pack would slowly